

SPECIAL VFR

The FARs limit Special VFR (SVFR) operations to within the controlled airspace around an airport where that controlled airspace extends down to the surface. The SVFR clearance basically is used to allow VFR flights to enter and leave the airport's controlled airspace and for pattern work when visibility or cloud cover is less than VFR requirements. At night, SVFR requires an IFR-equipped aircraft and an instrument-rated pilot in command, which raises some questions about this accident.

Regardless, once clear of controlled airspace thanks to an SVFR clearance, what's your plan? If the restricting weather phenomena is limited to the airport environment and better weather exists outside its controlled airspace, you're good to go. If not, are you going to scud run to your destination? At night? That's what an IFR clearance is for, along with the instrument rating.

The SVFR clearance definitely has its safe uses, but it really only helps resolve one set of problems—using it can create a whole different set, which the pilot may or may not be able to handle.

